The Earth Mother

A fallacy for all seasons

The "Venus" of Willendorf, c. 30,000 years old, dating from a time when all human imagery was feminine. In later times — when all human imagery was still feminine — images were more what we should expect of Divine Iconography. What did this image mean to its makers? And what should it mean to us?

A contributor to an Elektra-group notes:

The Venus of Willendorf — which is approximately 30,000 years old — is surprisingly detailed. There is a distinct relation to fertility and functionality. The corn-row hair, for a start, relates to agriculture, whilst the plump curves suggest an abundance within nature. The radical feminist, Camille Paglia, contends that there are two prevailing artistic forces that have dominated human history. The solar on the one hand, and the lunar or motherly on the other.

Of course, we have all heard this chestnut on many occasions. It tends to be satisfying (with different weightings) both to the patriarchal mind and to the "feminist", which is not surprising as there has never been very much difference between them.

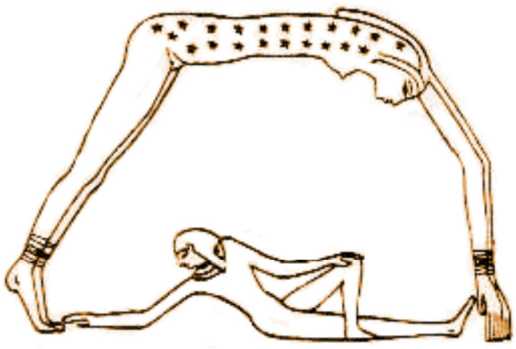
The idea that femininity — and especially Divine femininity — is *exclusively* associated with the lunar and chthonic, as opposed to the solar and celestial, is one that develops along with patriarchy itself. Yet wherever the feminine image of the Divine is strong, She is also solar and heavenly. Mary is hailed as Queen of Heaven (*ave regina coeli*) — precisely the title of the Goddess to Whom the Hebrew women of Jeremiah's time sacrificed honey-cakes, much to the prophet's chagrin.

> *But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto Her (Jer. 44, xvii)*

She is also the Woman clothed with the Sun, just as the Hindu Devi is repeatedly described in the scriptures as "brighter than a thousand suns" (in other words, infinitely transcending in solarity the physical representation of the Sun which we see in the sky — which is to say, being the Supernal Sun Itself).

We find sun-goddesses in Japan (Amaterasu Omikami is the solar progenitress of the Imperial line), in ancient Ireland, and everywhere in between. Dr. Martin Lings has given us a wonderful traditionalist study, "The Symbolism of the Luminaries in Old Lithuanian Songs", which examines a group of songs in an Indo-European language as old as Sanskrit which may well represent a tradition closer to the Primordial than the oldest Sanskrit texts. Nonetheless, as a patriarchal traditionalist he is a little nonplussed by the fact that the Sun is female and the Moon male (as in the old German designations Frau Sonne und Herr Mond). By a rather awkward twist, he tries to persuade us that Perkunas, the (male) lightning, is really the supreme God. But the lightning, in tradition, has always been the bridge between Heaven and earth, while the supreme Spirit (Atma) is always and everywhere the Sun.

There is no doubt that wherever there is a Heaven/earth or Sun/moon dichotomy, earth and the moon are the inferior elements. How could the reflected light of the moon ever be superior, or even equal, to the originating light of the Sun?



Sky-Goddess, Earth-God: When male images first become common, some twenty millennia later, they are subordinate, and therefore earthly and lunar (also smaller), as opposed to the Solar Mother or Sky Goddess. Later still, with the onset of "patriarchy", the rôles were reversed (a process known to archaeologists as "solarisation"). This reversal is uncritically accepted by modern "Goddess-feminists".

The attempt to assign lunar and chthonic attributes to the feminine and solar and celestial ones to the masculine was, therefore, an obvious and necessary move for early patriarchy. The ready acceptance of this by "feminists" is equally unsurprising, given the inversionist nature of Pit society and more particularly of its "left-wing" elements (a designation that is becoming increasingly meaningless as the whole ideology of the West progressively merges into an inversionist and anti-traditional super-capitalism, but to which, insofar as it means anything, the "feminist" still tends firmly to belong). The preference of the low over the high in everything from social class to spirituality, the preference of the gross over the fine and the ugly over the beautiful gives the patriarchal inversion of attributes a new attraction to "feminists" unintended by the original patriarchal theologisers — and yet, some would argue, the ultimate end of the same current.

But to return to the Venus of Willendorf. Like many early goddess-figures, She is termed a "fertility goddess" and we Aristasians have no quarrel with that designation. What we would take issue with is the sometimes-made assumption that here is something earthly — not to say earthy — and primitive (again a concept equally comforting to the evolutionist-progressist perspective, to the patriarchal denigration of the feminine, and to the "feminist" Love of the Low — thereby happily satisfying the whole Pit assembly).

These figures are certainly primitive. But we use the word — as any Traditionalist must — not with the evolutionist implication of "therefore low and rudimentary" but with the Traditionalist implication of "therefore closer to the Primordial".

The great Traditionalist and metaphysician, Ananda Coomaraswamy, has written seminal works, such as the essay, "Primitive Mentality", which explain persuasively why the "primitive" mind is in fact superior to our own. When he also tells us that:

> *"[our present civilisation stems from] a common cultural inheritance throughout an area extending from Mesopotamia to Egypt and the Ganges to the Mediterranean, founded upon the worship of the Great Mother".*

We may be sure, to say the least of it, that he is not envisaging a cult in any way inferior to the current Higher Religions.

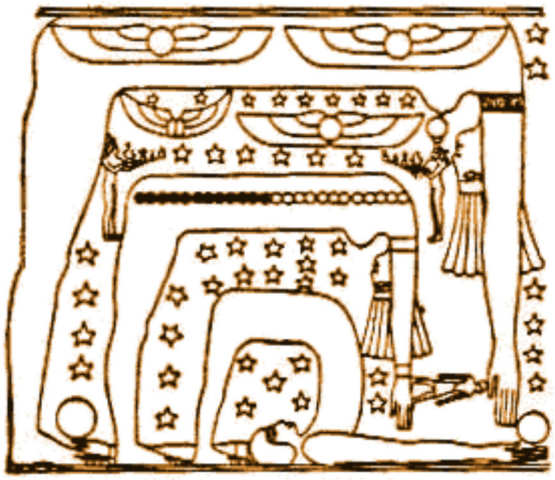
What ideas, precisely, were intended by our remote ancestresses? Certainly ideas which, if we are

traditionalists at all, we must assume to have been considerably superior to our own, and, like the Ideas of the Angels, "fewer, simpler and infinitely more profound". We cannot say with absolute precision what they were, but a few considerations should give us some guidelines on the ways in which we should be thinking.

First, let us recall that many of these "fertility" figures are associated with symbols that are always and everywhere recognised as solar — sunwheels, svastikas etc.

Secondly, let us consider that in the wholly pre-"patriarchal" phases of human history (which, indeed, constitute most of it) we find either no male figures at all, or extremely few, and therefore both aspects, Solar and lunar, Celestial and chthonic, were represented by the feminine.

We may also compare current feminine forms of Divinity, such as Mahalakshmi in India. In the Puranic hymns she is worshipped as "both Mahamaya and Sripitha" - that is, both the creatrix of the world-illusion and the immanent Spirit or Deity. In the same hymn she is hailed as "The Supreme Brahman, the ever-pervading Atma" - that is God, both immanent and transcendent; as "Both gross and subtle" and even as "great-wombed" bringing us directly to the physicality of the "Venus"-symbolism.



The Living Cosmos: The Three Realms - Heaven, Earth and the "middle realm" or "air"; otherwise termed the Solar, Lunar and Terrestrial realms. Note that at this stage in the transition, both the Solar and Lunar figures are feminine, with only the Terrestrial being masculine. At an earlier stage, all three were feminine. In the human microcosm the three realms are body, soul and Spirit.

Mahalakshmi, we are told by Western scholars, was originally a "fertility goddess". If this is true (and we think that, with the necessary clearing-away of misconceptions, it probably is) what does it mean? We know what Western scholars (particularly nineteenth-century ones), and their inverse copies the "feminists", think it means and want it to mean. They envision something primitive in the "Darwinist" sense of the term. Something rooted in the earth because it has never heard of the heavens. A view of "primitivity" born out of an unholy but very comfortable alliance between those who want to deny Heaven to the feminine and those who want to deny Heaven altogether.

But leaving aside these weary late-Victorian prejudices — this drab alliance of men in silk hats and women in dungarees — what might a fertility-cult *really* mean?

For a start, let us recall Mahalakshmi, in Whom the attributes of Transcendent Deity and those of the Creatrix of the world-illusion are united. A strange concept, perhaps, to some ascetic transcendentalists, but actually not other than the non-dualism of the Upanishads or the Buddhist assertion that ultimately Samsara and Nirvana are one. These doctrines are normally regarded as the latest and most sophisticated flowering of Vedic culture, but should we not expect them to be inherent in a much more fluent and perfect form in the earlier cultures,

True Fertility: Mahalakshmi preserves to this day the true meaning of "fertility" symbolism, being both "fertility Goddess" and image of Supreme Deity: both Creatrix of the World Illusion and Supernal Spirit. Her upright posture is itself the Solar Ray that strikes the waters of pure possibility, causing the Lotus of the manifest world to unfold. She is surrounded by the fecundity of the world - trees, flowers, mountains and the Elephant of Royalty, all of which proceed from Her and depend on Her for their being.

nearer to the Golden Age?

The further we go back, the more are the "ordinary" activities of life sacral. The more do the operations of the crafts, of agriculture, of "culture" as a whole express the Divine. The more life, "religious" and "saecular", forms a seamless and perfect whole. At this stage in human development, we should imagine that the very concept of *maya*, or world-illusion, in the form it later took would be unnecessary. In this form of culture, the "worldly" and the "holy" would have been so intimately intertwined that they scarcely existed as separable concepts.

The fact that these extremely ancient naked "Venus"-figures, which are early even by "matriarchal" standards, appear gross to us (and they *do* appear gross to us: "feminists" who pretend they do not are merely exercising their inversionist love of the gross and denial of the cultural aesthetics of their own inborn thought-world) is because they were not made for our eyes. Those who made them and worshipped them looked at them in quite a different light from that in which we see — and cannot avoid *seeing*, even if we can avoid misunderstanding — them. The "feminist" embrace of these images is precisely a case of embracing them for what they are not (just as many "Western Buddhists" embrace Buddhism for what it is not). The very misreading of those figures, which is perfectly natural, and almost inevitable, to us in our particular culture at its particular stage of development, is what makes them attractive to the "feminist".

Fertility symbolism is essentially a symbolism of a primordial, unified culture. It is the symbolism of the manifestation of all things out of the Divine: of the boundless Divine fecundity, and of the primordial non-dualist continuity of matter with the Spirit; of *maya* with *Atma*.

Fertility is what takes place at the point of juncture between Essence and substance. It arises from the co-operation of earth and the Sun. The lotus is the primary symbol of Mahalakshmi, dating from her days as a "fertility Goddess". While the lotus has many symbolic values (often parallel to those of the rose in the West), its primary and specific one is as the "Point of Creation". Where Essence meets substance: where the single Divine Ray (which is the form-bearing Essence) strikes the Surface of the Waters (which is the all-potential Substance), there blossoms the Lotus: the beautiful unfolding of the manifest world. It is upon this Lotus that Mahalakshmi is always depicted, either standing or enthroned.

It is here that we may seek the true meaning of the "fertility cult"; here that we may gain a hint of what our ancient mothers understood by images that now seem gross to us because we are gross (and do not make ourselves less gross by embracing their apparent grossness).

From all this, it will be clear that we are very far from denying the lunar and chthonic aspects of femininity, but we also affirm the Solar and Celestial ones, which, in the nature of things, must be considered primary.

If "feminism" were anything but an inversionist cult clinging onto the coat-tails of the late-patriarchal octopus, it would be "rediscovering" or "reclaiming" feminine Solarity, Royalty and Heavenliness. But the very mention of such words in relation to bongo "feminism" is sufficient — by the absurdity of the conjunction — to indicate to us what this "feminism" really is.

Meanwhile, Aristasians are perhaps the only Western devotees of the Solar Mother. How far such a devotion is relevant for a patriarchal world, I cannot say, but for the all-feminine world of Aristasia, it is not only a return to the primordial form of Deity, but the only form of religion that makes sense. We do not by any means deny other forms, but for many women today the original, primordial form of God, the Solar Mother (in some cases with Her Lunar Daughter) is a necessity.

All too often, however, they ask for bread and are given a piece of earth.

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